

Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee – Approved Minutes
January 19, 2010
Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902

Members Present: Celiny Alce, Gregory Baker, Melissa Brown, Eleanor Duckett, Regina Dull, Jonathan Fink, Chelsea Johnson, Larysa Kurylas, Sara Lappano, Diane Lynne, Leslie McDermott, Thomas Martin, Susan Petersen, Fran Ware

Members Absent: Maureen Carrington, Manuel Hidalgo, Zoe Lefkowitz, Christopher Lindsay, James Mensah, Patrick Naehu, Erin Roberts, Stewart Tsao, David Taghipour

County Staff: Rob Klein and Pete McGinnity for Wheaton Redevelopment; Director, Natalie Cantor, and Sue Koronowsky for Mid County Regional Services Center

Guests: Ed Murtaugh for Green Wheaton; Taylor Brown, for Wheaton Patch; Sandy Tallant for Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission; Ellen Bogage and Dana Davidson for Chesapeake Public Strategies; Steve Simon for Simon Public Relations; Robert Wulff and Vincent Burke, for B.F. Saul Co.; and Toto Irureta for Wheaton Football Club

Meeting Called to Order by the Chair, Mr. Baker, at 7:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION to approve the December minutes was made by Mr. Fink and seconded by Ms. McDermott. All were in favor and minutes were approved.

Highlights from January 17 Meeting with Senator Madaleno - by Mr. Baker

Mr. Baker provided a brief recap of the meeting with Senator Madaleno. Some concerns that came from the meeting were communication with other state agencies and the need for a tenant for the B. F. Saul project. Mr. Madaleno indicated it may be easier for the State to fund a County agency in the B. F. Saul project rather than bring a State agency from Annapolis or Baltimore. The committee will continue a dialog with Senator Madaleno.

Mid-County Regional Center Update – by Ms. Cantor

Ms. Cantor noted that this coming spring, cell phones can be used to pay for parking. The cell phone payment system is already in operation in Bethesda. On January 18, WMATA and the County broke ground for the new Glenmont Parking Garage. The anticipated completion for the garage will be 18 months.

Ms. Cantor and Mr. Dan Sadler, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff presented efforts to update the County's (GIS) database to better define Wheaton neighborhoods. There is a perception that crime is a problem in Wheaton. Ms. Cantor indicated part of the problem is the way crime is identified by the media as it relates to the location of the various crimes. Many crimes occurring far from the Wheaton CBD are reported as occurring in Wheaton when in fact, crime is down by 40%. This is because the boundaries of Wheaton are not defined. The general boundaries are approximately one-half to one-mile from the Wheaton Metro Station. While the boundaries are subject to change, Ms. Cantor later via e-mail provided WRAC with a map showing the proposed boundaries. Other boundaries are subject to change as we progress. GIS is working to match up Crime Reporting Areas (CRA's) to Police Reporting Area's (PRA's) to better link crime reports to meaningful locations. The ultimate goal is to have the correct location

of a crime displayed when an officer types in the actual address of the crime in his computer. So when the crime is reported in the Police media, the location of the crime will have a greater chance of being reported correctly.

B. F. Saul Update by Robert Wulff

Mr. Wulff showed WRAC a draft concept plan for the bus bay area, which included two office buildings, a hotel, 5,000 to 10,000 square-feet of retail space, and 150 – 400 residential units. Mr. Wulff noted that what he was providing was a very rough draft of a concept that would surely change in the next weeks. He noted that to make the project work, there would be many tradeoffs. No one will get everything they want.

The draft concept plan encompassed the area above and around the WMATA bus bays, which is the most problematic location. The Veirs Mill side appeared to be dominated by the bus bays which will need to be expanded from 13 bays to 15 bays. The current proposal calls for a pedestal structure 15' high to be built (about the same elevation as Georgia Ave.) over the bus bays. The Georgia Avenue side had an office and hotel entrance, but little or no retail. B.F. Saul feels that neither Georgia Avenue nor Veirs Mill Road will ever be a retail friendly/pedestrian friendly street. The concept plan was designed *inside* with various courts connecting the office, hotel, residential and retail for a very walkable, friendly area. Triangle Lane then becomes the core retail pedestrian area. Parking would be above ground. It's not known at this time how many levels of parking there would be. B. F. Saul is looking at the possibility of parking under the bus bays.

Mr. Wulff noted access problems along Georgia Avenue and the need to work with MD-DOT to get more curb cuts along Georgia Avenue than would normally be allowed. The concept would be driven in part by what will be needed to obtain federal office leases via General Services Administration (GSA). Mr. Wulff explained that approximately 30% of all GSA agencies will not even consider the plan of building office over top of a pedestal-type structure due to the possible risk. The proposed office space is 500' from the proposed metro entrance. B. F. Saul will consider changing where the office is located on the site, as it may be too far away from metro and create a problem for a tenant such as GSA. Mr. Wulff indicated that Wheaton would be competing with many jurisdictions for critical federal office leases. GSA's selection process for leased office space will drive many aspects of the final concept. B. F. Saul needs to meet and come to an agreement with WMATA before they can meet with GSA regarding proposed plans.

WRAC members had some concerns regarding the size of the "green space", the amount of traffic on Reddie Drive, the ability for Georgia Avenue to be pedestrian friendly and the Town Square. Mr. Wulff was not prepared to talk about the green space at the Town Square. He advised they couldn't close Reddie Drive as it is too important. They could, however, add street trees, furniture and different kinds of sidewalks. B. F. Saul feels that Georgia Avenue will not be a pedestrian friendly road. It will be visually attractive with streetscape and street trees. Mr. Wulff indicated the Town Square will be discussed at a later date, as it is not ready for public discussion at this time.

“Survey Monkey” Discussion

Mr. Klein thanked Ms. Dull for all her hard work in putting the Survey Monkey together. There was discussion regarding the “Survey Monkey”, but the results from the 13 WRAC members that took the survey indicate agreement with the Planning Board and staff on nearly all 28 issues. One exception was Item #6 relating to rezoning for higher density for single-family homes. Upon further review, the concern for Item # 6 appears to be the result of confusing wording on the report not an actual problem.

Sector Plan Update - Worksession #5 – by Ms. Tallant

Next steps – there will be one more Worksession with the Planning Board on zoning issues sometime in February. The staff will then do a “redline” rewrite of the plan. It will be transmitted to the County Executive who will have 60 days to review it. Next will be a Fiscal Analysis. It then goes to the County Council where there will be a public hearing for the Sector Plan. Dates should be set by next week.

Redevelopment Report - Rob Klein

Parking Policy Study – Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) have jointly commissioned a parking policy study to identify best practices and to establish a framework to update zoning codes. Parking is an issue and is very expensive. MCDOT and M-NCPPC will present a preview of the consultant’s recommendations on January 20, 2011 from 3:00 to 4:30 pm in the Executive Office Building Auditorium, 101 Monroe Street, to a group of stakeholders and receive their feedback. Once the study is finalized, MCDOT and M-NCPPC will brief the County Council and the consultant’s study will be made public. Mr. Klein will report back to WRAC.

Costco – There was some confusion over the number of fueling pumps - 8 or 16- proposed for its fueling station. The number of fueling pumps remains the same as originally proposed - 8.

County Executive Budget Forum – Mr. Klein stated the deficit this year is less than last year. Mr. Leggett supports the Westfield incentive for Costco and believes the \$4,000,000 will be recouped quickly. Costco will help keep the mall healthy, which is very critical. Next month there will be a presentation to WRAC by Westfield on their proposed long-term development plans.

Due to legal concerns with the icy conditions, Safeway will close off their parking lot within the next week. They will have cars towed if they park in the lot.

Streetscape Program – As part of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP Budget), streetscape improvements were completed in January on Elkin Street (east and west) between University Blvd. and Price Avenue.

Subcommittee Reports

Planning & Visioning – Mr. Martin reported they did not meet in January. The Planning & Visioning Subcommittee will meet on February 7. Mr. Martin attended the recent WUDAC meeting as the WRAC representative. He had several things to report: crime in Wheaton is down by 40% from last year; Wheaton 4th District will be getting 10 new police officers from the Police Academy; there is aggressive towing going on in the privately owned parking spaces; the Taste of Wheaton is scheduled for May 15; and the World of Montgomery is scheduled for October 16. In addition to the coming opening of the Irish Pub, the Passion Night Club is now open.

Project Review – Ms. Petersen reported they will meet on January 27 and will work on editing and condensing the framework they have been working on.

Economic Development – Mr. Fink reported they did not meet in January as they wanted to wait until the various civic and homeowner associations had been contacted. They will meet on February 1 and discuss the data they have.

Mr. Baker wanted to clarify for WRAC that in late 2009, WRAC voted to condense the subcommittees to three (3) – Planning & Visioning, Project Review and Economic Development. After talking with Ms. Cantor and others, it is confirmed that GreenWheaton is a joint subcommittee shared with WUDAC. WRAC participation in GreenWheaton has been minimal over the past six months. He advised WRAC members if they want to attend GreenWheaton meetings in addition to their regular subcommittee assignments they should do so. Mr. Baker and Mr. Klein will attend the next GreenWheaton meeting and explore the idea of a joint chair for GreenWheaton. They will also discuss how to deal with advocacy to ensure that when GreenWheaton speaks to County agencies, M-NCPPC etc., it is clear they are not speaking for the entire WRAC.

Green Wheaton – by Ed Murtagh reported their next meeting will be January 25. A recap of GreenWheaton's activities: they made a presentation to the Planning Board at the last worksession; met with Mr. Wulff and Ms. Bogage to discuss sustainability concerns; will be meeting with Delegate Al Carr regarding dark sky legislation; beginning preliminary talks about non-profit status; and spring initiatives. They meet the 4th Tuesday of every month.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Please note: your name will become public information, recorded in the minutes of this WRAC Committee meeting, which may be photocopied and disseminated to various groups, and may appear on the internet and become retrievable by internet search engines."